

december 2005

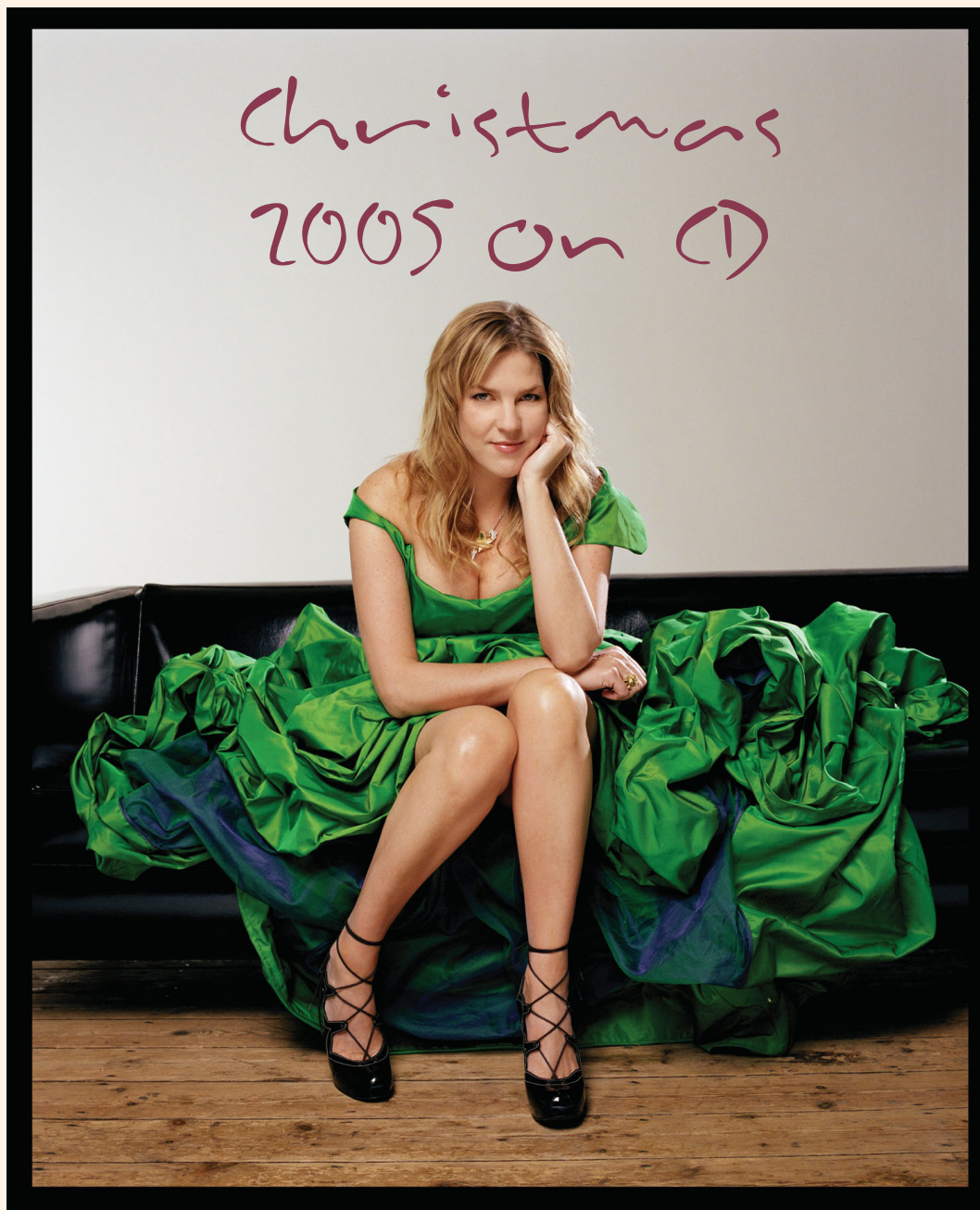
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Also...
31 st Annual Holiday Gift Guide
PART II

jazz & blues report

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Cover photo of Sam Cooke courtesy of Michael Ochs Archives.com



Photo of Diana Krall by Sam Taylor Wood - Verve Records



Christmas
2005
on CD



DIANA KRALL Christmas Songs VERVE JANE MONHEIT The Season EPIC

The two most universally popular female vocalists in jazz today have recently released their first Christmas albums.

Diana Krall actually released a 3-song EP in 1998 which came with a classy 1999 desk calendar. Those songs, Jingle Bells, "Christmas Time Is Here" and "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas" are reprised for this, her first full-length holiday CD. It is possible that at least two of those are the same recordings - but if so, they are mixed much better. The rest of the 12 favorites heard include "Let It Snow," "I'll Be Home For Christmas," "White Christmas," "Sleigh Ride," "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town," "Winter Wonderland," "The Christmas Song" and one for the following week - "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve." The

one somewhat lesser-known song included is her version of Irving Berlin's "Count Your Blessings Instead Of Sheep." Krall, accompanying herself on piano, is heard with either Anthony Williams or Russell Malone on guitar, either John Clayton or Ben Wolfe on bass and Jeff Hamilton on drums, plus the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra for most tracks.

Jane Monheit, who is now on a major label with Epic Records, has also released a sweet set of holiday songs. Other than "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas," "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town" and "Sleigh Ride," she picked a different set of songs for her offering. The



better-known pieces include the above, plus "The Christmas Waltz," "Moonlight In Vermont" and The Carpenters' "Merry Christmas Darling." She does several we don't hear too often, including "The Man With The Bag" (a hit for Kay Starr in the 50s), "I Heard The Bells On Christmas Day" and "My Grown Up List," written by David Foster and Linda Thompson. Jane is accompanied by her regular working quartet with the addition of a 7-piece horn section, which includes Lew

Soloff and Andy Snitzer on four cuts and a string section on three others. Vibist David Samuels adds his touch to "The Christmas Waltz." This comes in both the standard CD and DualDisc versions.

Although both these albums are in a similar vein, the singers themselves are quite different in that Monheit sings with more drama than the naturally laid back Krall. They both handle these holiday chestnuts very well and the backing is top notch. If you are getting really sick of hearing Mannheim Steamroller or whatever when you go to the parents', in-laws' or grandparents' homes for the holiday season, you might want to lay one or both of these on them to make your season brighter. I'm sure they will all like either one. I pretty much like them both about the same, hence the alphabetical order for the review.

For more info on these, go to www.ververecords.com for the Krall, or www.epicrecords.com for the Monheit.

Bill Wahl

GENUINE HOUSEROCKIN' CHRISTMAS

ALLIGATOR RECORDS

REPRINTED FROM OUR

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2003 ISSUE

Trimming the tree, wrapping presents, a few friends over for some cheer, a full-blown Yuletide bash- what could enhance a blues lover's holiday scene more than tracks from a tough roster of artists? Originals, for one thing. With a couple of exceptions, the fare on Genuine Houserockin' Christmas is self-penned by the respective artists and reflects the character of each. It lays out like this- deep double-entendre from Little Ed & The Blues Imperials, innocently titled "Christmas Time", sassy seduction from Shemekia Copeland,

"Stay A Little Longer, Santa", rocking harp courtesy of Carey Bell's "Christmas Train", bayou variations courtesy of C.J. Chenier and Marcia Ball, moody swing by way of Roomful Of Blues. If you know the artists, you get the idea. The originality and the strength of the tunes make this a disc that can take over a Christmas playlist. Any Alligator artists not mentioned so far are most likely here too. Blues people, this is holiday cash well spent. *Duane Verh*

MORE HOLIDAY CDS

MARTHA STEWART SERIES

EPIC/LEGACY

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JUAN OSCAR MUSIC

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FRIENDS

FAVORED NATIONS

KENNY ELLIS

FAVORED NATIONS

DAVID LEONHARDT

JAZZ GROUP

BIG BANG RECORDS

CRAIG CHAQUICO

HIGHER OCTAVE MUSIC

I have never been a fan of **Martha Stewart**, so I immediately laughed when her **Jazz for the Holidays** CD showed up on my desk. But, when I finally looked at it, I was quite surprised. This is actually a very nicely chosen, varied set of Christmas songs. It is part of a Stewart Holiday Series recently released on **Epic/Legacy Records**. This covers the gamut from some older cuts from Louis Armstrong, Peggy Lee & Benny Goodman, Louis Prima and Eartha Kitt all the way to offerings by Wynton Marsalis, Terence Blanchard, and Chris Botti. In between are fare such as Dexter Gordon's wonderful version of "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas," Herbie Hancock & Chick Corea teaming up for "Deck The Halls," Tuck Andress heard on solo guitar for "Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer," Tony Bennett on "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town," and more from Duke Ellington, Grover Washington Jr., Russell Malone and Tex Beneke & The Glenn Miller Orchestra. There is no recording/personnel information at all other than the set list, but being that this is a Martha Stewart production you

do get a recipe for Hot Crab Dip instead! There is also a **Traditional Songs for the Holidays** CD in this series, which includes such names as Mariah Carey, Aretha, Luther Vandross, James Taylor, Willie Nelson, Johnny Mathis, Nat King Cole and a pairing of songs by Bing Crosby and David Bowie (how'd that happen?); and a **Classical Favorites for the Holidays** with music performed by James Galway, The New York Philharmonic, Plácido Domingo, Boston Pops Orchestra and others. Go to www.epicrecords.com for more song info on any of the three in the series.

Now, let's go from Martha Stewart to something completely different. **Juan Oskar** is a trumpet and keyboard player from Arizona who has released a really *different* Christmas album on his own label titled **Christmas Is For Grownups Too**. Oskar says the album was inspired by The Trans Siberian Orchestra, The Ventures, Handel, Mannheim Steamroller, Mason Williams, J. S. Bach, Beethoven, Aaron Copland & "The 21st Century Chairman of the Board" and Herb Alpert. What a crew! As you might expect, the music is all over the map covering songs with Latin/Salsa, rock, ballad/easy listening and dance/club mix flavorings. There are 24 songs in all, with Oscar providing much of the music on the Yamaha Motif ES6 keyboard/synth. He also plays trumpet on about half the songs, sings in Spanish on some and has some guest female vocalists for some others. This is some fun stuff, but to see if it is your cup of tea, go to www.juanoscar.biz and navigate to the page with the face in the CD. Then click on it. Then you can listen to most of the songs. What did we ever do without the internet?

Since we are in *different* mode now, let's stay there for a while. **Steve Lukather & Friends** has released **Santamental** (I spelled it right) on **Favored Nations Records**. Mixing rock and blues with jazz they serve up a set of eight well-known holiday songs and two originals. Guitarist Lukather's friends on board for the trip include rock guitarists Steve Vai and Eddie Van Halen, saxist Edgar Winter and percussionist Lenny Castro. Lukather says they cut the whole record in a day and a half "with no click tracks, no pro-tools, no bullshit, just two-inch analog tape." He also says he couldn't pay the guests what they are worth so he'll be taking their garbage out for the rest of his life.

Give the Supreme Gift!



Read The Review at jazz-blues.com

Click the Featured Story Tab

& see Smitty's Pick #14 on Page 15
of this Holiday Special Edition

Sign up at www.bluescruise.com

Good sense of humor there...and in the music too. Check this one out at www.favorednations.com. where you can sample three tracks.

Also on **Favored Nations** comes **Hanukkah Swings** from **Kenny Ellis**. We see many albums every year with a Christmas theme, but very, very few come our way focusing on Hanukkah. Ellis, a multi-faceted performer and cantor draws on his lifelong affinities for both the Jewish culture and the swing big bands of Count Basie, Benny Goodman and others for this project and came up with a thoroughly enjoyable set of 10 songs...eight classics and two originals, celebrating the Hanukkah season. He sings in both English and Hebrew and throws a bit of Yiddish in on the parody "Twas The Night Before Hanukkah." He's got some fine musicians on board too, including Stu Goldberg of Mahavishnu Orchestra fame on piano and keyboards. This one can be sampled at www.favorednations.com as well. Very enjoyable music!

Back to the mainstream, Easton PA based **David Leonhardt Jazz Group** has released another album on **Big Bang Records** titled **I'll Be Home For Christmas**. The fleet fingered pianist/leader Leonhardt is joined by the very able vocalist Nancy Reed, with Larry McKenna/saxes, Matthew Parrish/bass and Taro Okamoto/drums for a set of 15 Christmas classics in straight-ahead jazz style. The band is tight and works very well together and that is all evident here.

For more information on Leonhardt's unit, his recordings and to sample some tracks, go to www.davidleonhardt.com.

And for the light jazz fans out there, guitarist **Craig Chaquico** has released **Holiday** on **Higher Octave Music**. Chaquico was formerly a guitarist with Jefferson Starship and since moving into the light jazz arena he has become a popular performer, garnering loads of airplay on the WAVE stations nationwide. He mixes nine traditional Christmas songs with three originals, coming up with some very lyrical music full of catchy melodies and licks. Christmas music comes off very well in the light jazz format, which is why the annual concerts by people like Dave Koz, Peter White and many others are so well attended.

To check this one out, or sample some tracks, you can go to www.higheroctave.com. **Bill Wahl**

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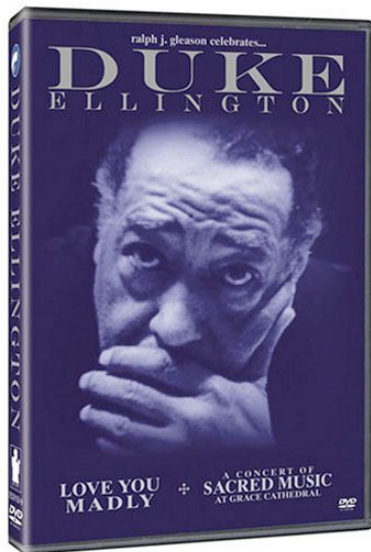


Jazz & Blues Report 31st Annual Holiday Gift Guide PART II

As is the case every year at this time, this section will give you some ideas on holiday gifts to pick up for a friend...or to drop hints on for yourself!

As usual, most of these are boxed or 2-CD sets and DVD concert or documentary videos, although we have chosen some single CDs as well. Most are very new, some a bit older titles that we have just recently latched on to. None have been previously reviewed. As has been our custom, after the jazz & blues section we have several items in other genres for those folks with diverse tastes, or those on your list who are not into jazz or blues as such. This is the second part of this year's offerings. Most in this issue are DVDs. For the real motherload, download our November 2005 issue and check it out.

Happy shopping and Happy Holidays!



DUKE ELLINGTON Love You Madly A Concert Of Sacred Music at Grace Cathedral EAGLE ROCK DVD

Any Duke Ellington fan out there will want to get their hands on this just-released DVD of prime Duke from two programs presented by Ralph J. Gleason in the mid '60s. The first is **I Love You Madly**, a documentary exploring the life and legacy of the Duke, chock full of performances and interview clips. We see him as he prepares for the Concert

of Sacred Music as well as footage of his band at Basin Street West in San Francisco and the Monterey Jazz Festival, plus clips from actual recording sessions. You even see how he tries to get some rest in the dressing room during an break between sets at a live gig. A fantastic look into the Duke's life at the time.

Part 2 of the DVD presents the historic **Concert of Sacred Music performed live at Grace Cathedral** in San Francisco. It was the first of a series of sacred concerts Ellington would perform in various churches in different cities. The concert combines jazz with classical music, spirituals, gospel, blues and dance, and the orchestra is joined by several guests, including Jon Hendricks, Esther Marrow, the Herman McCoy Choir and tap dancer Bunny Briggs. The closing piece, "David Danced Before The Lord," is a showcase for Briggs and Hendricks.

These programs are of great historical importance and have never been previously available on DVD.

Presented in the original black and white format, the audio choices are mono and Dolby Digital Stereo. The quality of both audio and video is quite good. You really can't go wrong with this for any fan of the Duke.

Bill Wahl



THE RUDY VAN GELDER EDITIONS

From 1953 to 1967, Alfred Lion produced a body of work that ranks as the most innovative series of recordings in modern jazz. Almost all of these masterpieces were documented by the extraordinary Rudy Van Gelder; a self-taught engineer who more than set a new standard. Devoid of caution or timidity, he captured the full power and rich sound of jazz ensembles with dazzling clarity. His contribution to the focused approach that Blue Note took at every stage of any album was immeasurable. Decades later, Rudy agreed to take a second look at the original recordings, bringing them into the digital domain with the same skill and focus. Six more RVG Editions have just been released. If you think you've heard these gems before, listen again.



Let Me Tell You 'Bout It, Leo Parker



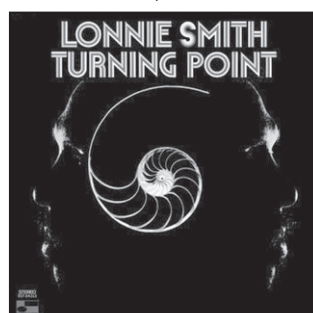
Down With It, Blue Mitchell



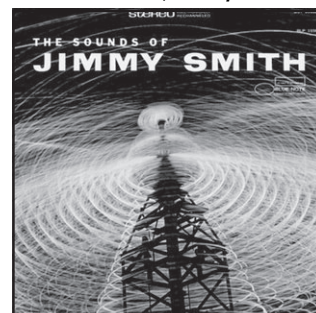
That's Where It's At, Stanley Turrentine



Reach Out, Hank Mobley



Turning Point, Lonnie Smith

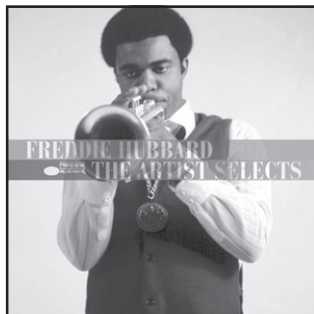


The Sounds of Jimmy Smith, Jimmy Smith

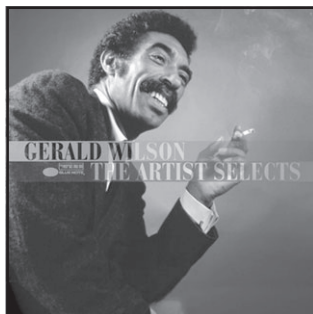
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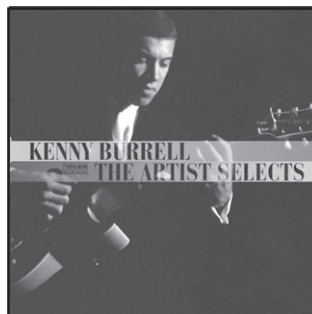
ARTIST SELECTS SERIES: A SELECTION OF THEIR PERSONAL FAVORITE BLUE NOTE RECORDINGS, SELECTED & SEQUENCED BY THE ARTIST



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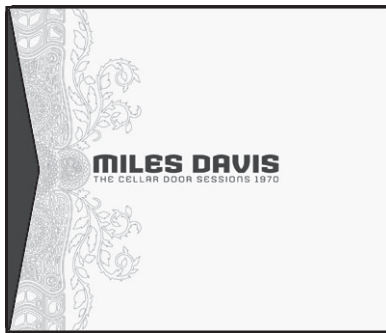
PLUS....

**A Major Find on Blue Note...
Never Before Released!**

Thelonious Monk Quartet with John Coltrane Live at Carnegie Hall

These newly-discovered sonically-pristine concert tapes from Carnegie Hall in November 1957, found in the Voice of America archives at the Library of Congress in Washington DC earlier this year, capture 51-minutes of remarkable music from two legends at the height of their powers.





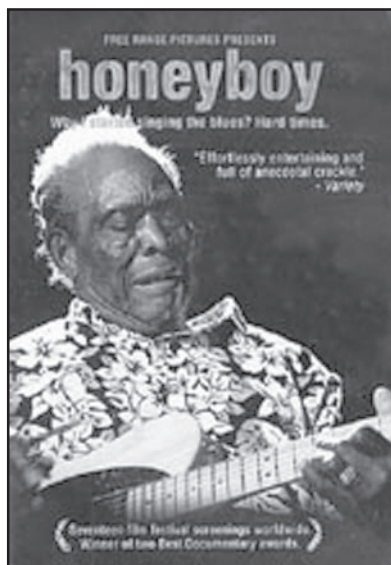
MILES DAVIS

The Cellar Door Sessions 1970 COLUMBIA/LEGACY BOX SET

This boxed set of Miles' Cellar Door sessions was a feature review in the Holiday Gift Guide on our November issue.

However, after the issue was printed we found out that the release date had been moved to some manufacturing hold ups. The new release date is said to be December 20.

To read the review, refer to the November issue if you still have it, or you can download it from our website at www.jazz-blues.com. **Bill Wahl**



HONEYBOY EDWARDS

Honeyboy

FREE RANGE PICTURES DVD

This DVD chronicles the life and times of one of the last living great Delta bluesmen - David "Honeyboy" Edwards. It has been out a few years, but I just picked up a copy when I recently saw Honeyboy in an informal concert performance at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

Throughout the movie Honeyboy

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recounts so many aspects of his past, the early days in Mississippi and stories of many other Delta bluesmen such as Robert Johnson, Big Joe Williams and others, that the viewer gets a big lesson in an important chapter in Blues history in 84 thoroughly-enjoyable minutes.

Some of what he covers includes playing a little guitar for Big Joe after which Williams said "I can learn you how to play." Then he recalls how the two hooked up and hit the road together, but how Joe liked to "fight all the time."

He talks about things like gambling, hopping freight trains, playing on the street, laying with women and life in the deep south.

Both he and B.B. King have segments where they talk about life as a sharecropper - what a sharecropper actually was, how it all worked (the sharecroppers did all the work) and the like.

In addition to B.B., there are appearances by Willie Foster and Waymon Meeks who add more discourse and offer their own live performances.

Honeyboy traces his travels that eventually had him landing in Chicago, and he covers many aspects of Blues in Chicago and some of its players, such as Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf, how much he missed Little Walter after he died in 1968, and then the same again after losing his wife. Now 90 and still living in Chicago, Honeyboy is still here, but all his old friends are gone.

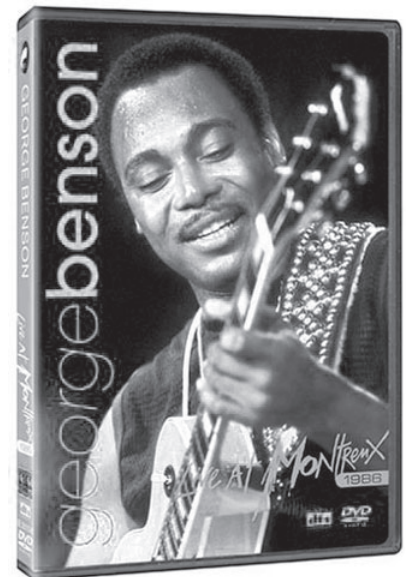
He fondly speaks of Michael Frank of Earwig Records, who befriended him many years ago and has been his manager since 1975.

During the movie you'll also see some clips with interesting and informative input from Alligator Records founder and president Bruce Iglauer. Throughout the movie Honeyboy plays and sings, and it comes to your home with fantastic audio and video quality.

Honeyboy Edwards is a great storyteller, and he keeps you captivated throughout this DVD.

There have been many documentaries on the blues, but **Honeyboy**, released in 2002, may just be the best one I have seen.

A must have for anyone who is into the blues. **Bill Wahl**



GEORGE BENSON

Live At Montreux, 1986 EAGLE ROCK DVD

Eagle Rock Entertainment has just released this set from George Benson's 1986 performance at the 1986 Montreux Jazz Festival. It is yet another chapter in Eagle Rock's ever expanding Montreux series.

A huge name in the contemporary jazz format, Benson is remembered by many for his masterful guitar work starting with joining jazz organist Jack McDuff's trio in 1962 and going on to forge his own successful solo career with albums on Prestige, Columbia, Verve and CTI.

Most of those albums showcased his Wes Montgomery-influenced guitar playing, but he broke out big as a vocalist with his cover of Leon Russell's "This Masquerade" in 1976 which became a massive hit. He's been known as a vocalist/guitarist ever since.

The Russell song is not on this set, but some of his other hits are, such as "The Greatest Love Of All," "Turn Your Love Around" and "On Broadway." You'll also hear "Affirmation" (which is one of the instrumentals), "Beyond The Sea," "Lady Love Me (One More Time)," "Feel Like Making Love," "Turn Your Love Around," "In Your Eyes," another instrumental "My Latin Brother" and more.

His band, which includes a horn section, is tight and funky; the audio is very good with a choice of stereo, Dolby 5.1 surround or DTS 5.1 surround, and the video is quite good for

the time, especially on closeups, but suffers at times due to the inherent problems with stage lighting.

A good one indeed for followers of Benson as a vocalist, with enough guitar work to satisfy some of those who want to hear him in that mode. **Michael Braxton**



TOMMY CASTRO
Whole Lotta Soul
BLIND PIG DVD

**ROD PIAZZA
& THE MIGHTY
FLYERS**
Big Blues Party
BLIND PIG DVD

California's Sierra Nevada Brewery has extended its enterprise beyond its excellent beer. The owners- avid blues fans- added a concert hall (bka The Big Room) onto the brewery proper and have since featured some of the hottest West Coast blues and roots artists onstage. These performances have provided the first content for a fledgling TV series, *Sierra Center Stage*. Two of these are hopefully just the leadoff pair of a long line of quality DVD concert titles as well.

The format is straightforward and the performances are top-notch on both discs. Castro's traveling four-piece is augmented by studio pals Jimmy Pugh (keys), Tom Poole (trumpet) and Kevin Brown (second guitar). The meat of the set is his recent CD *Soul Shaker* and vocalist and labelmate Renee Austin does a nifty cameo on that disc's "Let's Give Love A Try". The expanded Castro band is a treat in this "live" context, at times evoking a presence not unlike another hot Bay Area outfit of yore- The legendary Electric Flag.

Piazza on DVD would be worth it just for the fine threads he sports but his harp work is also his typical classy fare. Honey and the rest of the crew are in fine form and Mrs. P is a splendid show-stealer, brandishing both her foxy locks and her phenomenal two-fisted boogie piano work. For those who couldn't make the shows, pick up a couple six-packs of Sierra Nevada pale ale & pop in either of these high-powered sets. **Duane Verh**

Check the Site for Special Editions

www.jazz-blues.com

NORMAN GRANZ JAZZ AT MONTREUX SERIES

EAGLE DVD

About a year ago, Eagle Rock Entertainment issued a series of DVDs featuring concert recordings from Montreux Jazz Festival performances from back in the '70s.

While I have only seen some of these, I'd like to relay the info that they are available should any of the artists in the series be of interest to you or someone you may be buying a gift for. I can vouch for the fact that the ones I have seen all offered very good sets of music and the audio and video were quite good, especially considering the fact that they were done 30 years ago.

They were typical of Norman Granz' first class productions, and I would presume they are all in keeping with the Granz tradition. The ones in the series I am have seen and can vouch for are:

Benny Carter '77, with Carter joined by Ray Bryant/piano, Niels Pedersen/bass and Jimmie Smith/drums for seven cuts, including "Body & Soul" "On Green Dolphin Street," Wave," "In A Mellow Tone" and "Three Little Words."

Count Basie Jam '75, with the Count on piano, Niels Pedersen/bass and Louis Bellson/drums being the rhythm section for Roy Eldridge/trumpet, Johnny Griffin/tenor sax and Milt Jackson/vibes. Four songs are the jam fare - "Billie's Bounce," "Montreux Blues I," "Lester Leaps In" and Montreux Blues II."

Roy Eldridge '77, with trumpeter Eldridge joined by

Sixteen Newly-recorded Holiday Gems!

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LITTLE CHARLIE & THE NIGHTCATS
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Oscar Peterson/piano, Niels Pedersen/bass and Bobby Durham/drums. The set includes "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea," "I Surrender Dear," "Dale's Wail," "Bye Bye Blackbird" and "Perdido."

Oscar Peterson Trio '77 is a rather different type of trio, as the great pianist is joined by two bassists, Ray Brown and Niels Pedersen. Among the nine songs are "Old Folks," "Indiana," "There Is No Greater Love," "Teach Me Tonight" and "Sweet Georgia Brown."

Mary Lou Williams '78 is a solo piano concert, featuring Williams on eight songs, including the opening medley "The Lord Is Heavy/Fandangle/N.G. Blues/For The Figs/Baby Bear Boogie/Roll 'Em," plus "Over The Rainbow," "Offertory Meditation," "The Man I Love," "Tea For Two," "What's Your Story Morning Glory" and "Honeysuckle Rose."

The others in the series are **Ray Bryant '77**, **Milt Jackson & Ray Brown '77** and **Ella & Basie (The Perfect Match) '79**.

Then, in March of this year some more titles were issued in the series, including **Jazz at the Philharmonic '77**, **Dizzy Gillespie Sextet '77**, **Clark Terry Sextet '77**, **Eddie Lockjaw Davis '77**, **Tommy Flanagan Trio '77** and **Oscar Peterson Solo '75**. From what I have seen these all come with choices of stereo, DTS Surround Sound or Dolby 5.1.

For more information on the series, you can go to www.eaglerockent.com, and somehow from there you need to try to land on Norman Granz Jazz at the Philharmonic.

If no luck, try Amazon. *Bill Wahl*

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BUDDY RICH & HIS BAND

The Lost Tapes

LOBITOS CREEK/LIGHTYEAR DVD

Dating to 1985, this DVD presents performance footage from Buddy Rich's last recorded concert before his death two years later.

These tapes were recovered from a fire and the original surround sound audio was completely restored. Another concert recorded on the same night, the **Channel One Suite**, is also available on the same label.

Rich was around 68 at the time of this concert, and was still in good form. The band swings and screams and Rich gets plenty of solo space, which is what the fans generally want to hear when they go to a concert performed by a drummer-led unit.

Although the materials accompanying this CD seem to suggest that this is a new release, I believe it was previously available as **The Lost West Side Tapes** – that titled derived from the fact that the set closes with the "West Side Story Medley."

Since I've not seen that issue, it is possible that audio and video improvements may have been made for this new one. Both are very good, especially considering that it was 20 years ago, and the audio certainly presents a natural big band sound, which can be heard in either DTS or Dolby Digital 4. Some of the other songs head are "Mexicali Rose," "Cotton Tail," and "Round Midnight." Among the members of his band at the time were pianist Bill Cunliffe and tenor saxophonist Steve Marcus, who is a standout throughout.

Among the extras on the DVD is a **Solos** section, where you can choose just the solos from Rich throughout the concert, or those of Cunliffe, or Marcus, or any of four others.

There is also a **Commentaries** section offering words from Buddy, his wife Marie, daughter Cathy, drummer Dave Weckl and others.

A very well presented set of Buddy Rich's brand of big band jazz.

Bill Wahl

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B.B. KING BOOKS

One looking for a holiday present for a blues lover could do far worse than purchasing an absolutely wonderful new coffee table book plus more devoted to the King of the blues.

The B. B. King Treasures: Photos, Mementos & Music from B. B. King's Collection is by King, Dick Waterman and Charles Sawyer (Bulfinch). Sawyer, who wrote the first book-length biography of King, *The Arrival of B.B. King*, contributes a concise biography from King's days growing up in Mississippi to his days as an ambassador for the music.

The remainder of the book is filled with King's recollections as given to Dick Waterman, who supplements these recollections of growing up, working on the farm, moving to Mem-

*Jazz up your
holidays!*

A Smooth Jazz Christmas

■ **Dave Koz & Friends**
Patti Austin
Jonathan Butler
David Benoit

Palace Theatre

December 16

Friday, 7:30 PM • \$50, \$45 & \$35



■ **A Peter White**
Christmas *featuring*
Rick Braun
Mindi Abair

Palace Theatre

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phis, touring and crossing over. There are not only some terrific photographs (many are very rare), but also some reproductions of memorabilia, including his sharecropping account from 1940, tickets, programs and posters for his shows, along with sheets showing how much he was earning prior to Sid Seidenberg taking over his management in the late sixties.

You can see him from his WDIA days to receiving the musical equivalent of the Nobel Prize in Sweden with King Carl Gustav handing him the award.

In addition there is a CD with King's recollections and some unsued tracks. This is a multi-media feast for fans of one of the true legends of world music. Compiled in part to celebrate his 80th birthday, **The B.B. King Treasures**, is indeed a treasure.

While it has a \$40.00 list price and is in local stores, it can be obtained from amazon.com and other places for under \$30.00. Hopefully places will have it on sale for the holidays.

A different approach to King and his life is **B.B. King, There is Always One More Time** by David McGee (Backbeat Books). Part of the **Lives in Music** series, McGee provides some biographical overview of King's music and life, but this is really a survey of King's lengthy recording career that

is now in its sixth decade.

This is more than simply a survey of King's extensive recordings, as McGee has interviewed numerous participants in many of these recordings – ranging from first sessions with the Nashville Bullitt label and Calvin Newborn, who was on that session with other members of his family, to his recent collaborations with various blues and pop superstars.

He also provides extensive commentary on the recordings themselves, which can be somewhat exhausting reading at times although worthwhile as he traces the development and maturation of King's style. Unfortunately, some of the major players, especially in King's earlier days like Maxwell Davis, are no longer with us.


He presents his opinions intelligently and fervently, but not afraid to critique some recordings. He generally notes the sources of King's recordings, although there are gaffes as he fails to correct the source of *Gambler's Blues* that King originally recorded on his **Blues is King** disc (it was a top ten hit for Dinah Washington as *You Satisfy* and then redone as Gambler's Blues by Washington who added a verse from Billie Holiday's *Fine and Mellow*), nor correctly attribute *Sloppy Drunk* (he attributes it to Jimmy Rogers who likely got it from

John Lee 'Sonny Boy' Williamson but the song goes back to Lucille Bogan). There are a few other examples and also King's first three albums for ABC Paramount are inadequately covered.

The first album **Mr. Blues** is discussed but not given its own subchapter like most recordings, but neither **Confessin' the Blues** nor **Paying the Cost to be the Boss** are mentioned nor analyzed even briefly. Also King's guest appearance with U2 is discussed at length (deservedly so), King's guest appearances on CDs by blues legends and associates like Arthur Adams, Robert Lockwood Jr and Koko Taylor are not mentioned. This is not as serious as the omission of the ABC albums, but still these recordings still say a lot about King, especially Lockwood who played such an important role in helping shape King's career at the beginning.

These points detract a little from the book, but are relatively minor. I should point out that I found this slower reading than **The B.B. King Treasures**, but that is in the very nature of what McGee is attempting. It is not something for a very casual fan of the blues, or even King, but rather for the serious enthusiast of King's music. One will fine much to provoke thought and perhaps lead one to listen again or anew to King's music.

Ron Weinstock



SUNDAYS **BROWNS GAMES** Nov 27 & Dec 4 Ron Howard & Cruisin' 5PM

MONDAYS **EDDIE & THE EDSLS**

TUESDAYS

NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
1 BILLY & THE BULLETS	6 BILLY & THE BULLETS
8 KENTUCKY THUNDER	13 KENTUCKY THUNDER
15 TBA	20 AND 27
22 ERNIE KRIVDA BIG BAND	ERNIE KRIVDA BIG BAND

WEDNESDAYS

NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
2 READY OR NOT	7 BASICALLY BLUE
9 WYNG IT	w/KRISTINE JACKSON
16 MY THREE SONS	14 GEEZE CATS
23 E.T. KING & DETERMINATION	21 MY THREE SONS
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Different Genres

Here are some CDs and DVDs that may have little to do with jazz, blues, funk, soul or R&B, but they are all good choices for those nostalgic trips, or for people who enjoy a variety of music styles. They are also some ideas for people on your shopping list who just aren't exactly into either jazz or blues. The emails responding to our inclusion of such items has been so great, that we will be including some reviews such as these in our issues throughout the year.

SINGER SONGWRITERS

DAVID GRAY

TRACY CHAPMAN

CYNDI LAUPER

FIONA APPLE

NATASHA BEDINGFIELD

NIKI ANDRE

If your musical tastes go beyond the realms of jazz and blues into the singer/songwriter arena, or someone on your gift list fits that bill, there are several recent releases worthy of mention.

I first heard **David Gray** while experiencing a two-hour Thai Yoga Massage a couple of years ago. The masseuse generally played new age/meta-physical instrumental music to zone out by. This time she said she'd try something different - describing him as a cross between Bob Dylan and Tracy Chapman (a good analogy as it turned out). The massage began and I became so engrossed in the music I did something I rarely do - totally absorbed every bit of both the lyrics and the music. The album was **White Ladder** (released in 2000) and I had to have it - immediately. As luck would have it, she had two copies and laid one on me. It was rather minimalistic music, but extremely well written with deep lyrics and rich, melodies. Gray, who is from Wales and is a unique blend of folk, rock and soul, had another album since that one, but I'd not heard any of it. Then came this new one, **Slow Motion**, released in September on **TKO/BMG Records**. Opening with the orchestral sounds on "Alibi," it did not take long

to realize that the music here was much more involved than the paired down style of the earlier album I'd heard. But as infectious as the **White Ladder** album was, I believe this one has taken that quality to an even higher level. This is one disc you could probably lay on anyone who is into the singer/songwriter side of things and be quite sure they will love it. This album is also available as a DualDisc (one side - CD side - is the audio, and the other - DVD side - generally has the audio in enhanced stereo or 5.1 surround sound plus some videos, though each DD has different types of DVD content.) Check it out and sample some tracks at www.davidgray.com.

Now, how about **Tracy Chapman** herself! Cleveland-born Chapman has been releasing excellent albums since around 1988. Her latest, **Where You Live**, was just released on **Elektra/Atlantic Records**. Like Gray, Chapman writes serious songs rather than the lightweight fluff so many others come up with. Chapman has so many great songs under her belt, it is tough to start naming them for fear of running on and on. Those who are real fans know what I mean. Unfortunately too many people have only heard the two or so songs that keep playing over and over on the Wave and Light Rock radio stations - and they aren't even her better songs. But the Satellite listeners know better. This album features a more paired down, informal kind of band and performance than heard on some of her previous work and it works to good effect. It might grow on you at just a bit slower pace than some earlier ones, but grow on you it does nonetheless. Chapman has a real knack for staying in that medium tempo groove almost constantly without it ever getting even close to being monotonous. I'd often wondered why I'd never heard of Tracy Chapman since I've been involved in the Cleveland music scene since 1978. As it turns out, she got out of town as soon as she could due to some really bad experiences. I'd have to think that this album's "3,000 Miles" was written about Cleveland. I'd be quite surprised if it was not. It's been three years in coming, but **Where You Live** is another very welcome addition to Tracy Chapman's discography. Check out more on this album at www.atlanticrecords.com, scroll down to the artists list and click on Tracy Chapman.

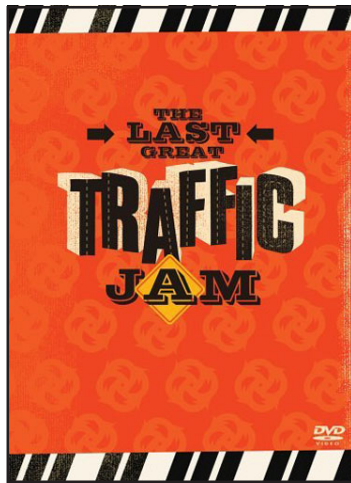
Remember when **Cyndi Lauper** came on the scene in the early eighties as kind of a ditsy little blonde? Well she sure showed everyone that she was not only a unique and powerful singer, but a marvelous songwriter. Not only has she had a slew of hits, but songs she's written, or first recorded, have been covered by such diverse artists as Miles Davis ("Time After Time") and Phil Collins ("True Colors"). Her latest CD, **The Body Acoustic** on **Epic Records**, is just what the title might suggest - a collection of many of her best known songs performed acoustically. While some, such as "Time After Time" are done similarly to the originals, others are given a whole new twist, whether it be infused with bluegrass, reggae, ska, blues or whatever. Some of the other songs included are "All Through The Night," "True Colors," "She Bop," "Sisters of Avalon," "Money Changes Everything" and, oh yes, "Girls Just Want To Have Fun." She also has some guests on most of the tracks, including Sarah McLachlan, Ani DiFranco, Vivian Green, Shaggy and Jeff Beck. Three new songs are heard here, including "Above The Clouds," an scorchingly beautiful ballad she co-wrote with Beck who is heard on guitar, and another original ballad, "I'll Be Your River," on which she is joined by Green. Lauper's voice is not only a powerhouse, but she has an impressive range to boot. While evident on her albums, I recently saw her in a concert promoting this album. I left the joint with no doubts as to the singing abilities of Cyndi Lauper. No wonder Miles liked her. This album is also available as a DualDisc which is said to include some live performance videos. Since seeing her in concert, I'd be interested to see that one as I have the CD version. Check this one out at www.epicrecords.com, or even more at www.cyndilauper.com.

When **Fiona Apple** burst onto the scene in 1996 at the age of 18 she garnered quite a lot of critical acclaim, though many admitted she had some room to grow. She's had one album and a whole lot controversies between her debut album and this new one, **Extraordinary Machine** on **Epic Records**. She's now come back with her strongest effort yet. Her lyrics have definitely matured, and the music has as well. Described by almost everyone since the beginning as a smokey

voiced alto, the singer/songwriter/pianist delivers a dozen songs that definitely don't have "pop hit" written on any on them, but they have that quality that steadily grows on you, and thus will probably have a longer lasting appeal. This is due in no small part to the clever piano-based arrangements and the diverse nature of the songs themselves. Some of them are quite jazzy. This is a surprisingly good album from Fiona Apple. This one also is available as a DualDisc with videos and live performances. Check out Fiona at www.epicrecords.com. If you like this one, there is another singer in the same vein who recently piqued my attention when watching the Austin City Limits Festival video - **Rachael Yamagata** - also a smokey and husky voiced alto who sings, writes and plays piano. She has an album titled **Hapenstance** on BMG Records.

If you have a younger someone on your gift list who listens to the pop fluff put out by Britney Spears and the like, you might want to have them move up a step or two with **Unwritten** by one of England's new young pop stars, **Natasha Bedingfield**. She's been very successful overseas with her blend of hip hop, pop, ballads and R&B, and her album has just been released in the US, so chances are your gift target won't already have it. She's accomplished quite a bit in a short time, in fact Bedingfield became just the third UK woman to debut at number one with a first album. You might want to choose the DualDisc version which includes some music videos, recording studio footage and an interview. Check it out at www.epicrecords.com.

While we don't usually cover EPs, one came through that deserves some attention in the R&B/hip hop vein. **Niki Andre** has a 3-song debut on her own label titled **First Light**. The 28-year old Canadian singer/songwriter, who is the daughter of a jazz musician, has a silky-smooth angelic voice. All three songs are done in a laid back style which fits her like a glove. In her own words, she refers to her music as "a lyrical fusion of urban hip hop and sultry diva jazz. I call it Dirty Jazz." I'll go along with that. Hopefully she will be releasing a full length album, as I found myself listening to these three cuts over and over again. You might want to kook into her for yourself. Check her out at www.sheilluminatesit.com. **Bill Wahl**



TRAFFIC

The Last Great Traffic Jam EPIC RECORDS DVD

This one is a baby boomer's delight. I first became a fan of Stevie Winwood through his work with the Spencer Davis Group (remember "Gimme Some Lovin'") and continued to be from the first Traffic album in '67 until their jazzy "Low Spark of High Heel Boys" era. Unfortunately, Winwood's post-Traffic work did little for me, but the 1994 Traffic reunion tour again sparked my interest. Since I was not able to see them in a concert on that tour, this recent release of the DVD from the tour grabbed my attention once again.

At the time of this tour, Chris Wood (saxes, flute and keyboards) had passed away. Dave Mason was long gone as he left the band early on to pursue a solo career. But two of the original members, Winwood and drummer Jim Capaldi, were on hand; and although Wood is missed, Randall Bramlett does a fine job on saxes, flutes and keyboards, and the band is rounded out by guitarist Mike McEvoy and drummer/percussionist Walfredo Reyes Jr. Winwood plays Hammond B3 organ, Yamaha grand piano, guitar, and sings lead on all but "Light Up Or Leave Me Alone," which is sung by Capaldi. The bottom line here is....they sound fantastic. Often when you see reunions like this, the result is disappointing, or worse. Winwood seems to be having a great time returning to the roots, so to speak, after too many years in a more pop vein where his musical talents as an instrumentalist were all but lost. He and Capaldi spark the new members and the result is every bit as satisfying as

the recent Cream reunion (see our November '05 issue), and perhaps even more so for those who were heavily into Traffic.

While the songs are heard in full, sometimes the video shifts to crowd scenes from the concert, or from the '60s, or people laying in a puddle of mud, or sometimes psychedelic patterns, black and white closeups, bus scenes or other assorted odd things. It is not bothersome at all, as it could have been if not done right. The only fault I can find is that as Winwood builds on his piano solo on "Glad," and he is well into it, the song just stops and segues to a dressing room scene. Since the same thing happens on the audio CD side of the DualDisc version (except that on the DD the piano solo is faded-out), I'd have to think some kind of technical problem caused them to make the cut. Although I do believe that footage from several different concerts were used here, perhaps that was the best footage of the song...who knows? But, Winwood gets into more great solos, such as on the rock-turns-to-jazz "Low Spark of High Heel Boys" One extra treat is the appearance of Gerry Garcia on guitar when he played "Dear Mr. Fantasy" at the San Francisco concert. Another treat is the comic antics of Capaldi scattered throughout. Sadly, He passed away in January of this year before he could see the worldwide release of this video.

Some of the other songs heard are "Pearly Queen," "Medicated Goo," "Mozambique" (a jazzy/Santana-ish excursion), "Light Up Or Leave Me Alone," "40,000 Headmen," and "John Barleycorn (Must Die)," which is a trio with Winwood on acoustic guitar, Bramlett on flute and Capaldi on tambourine/second vocals. The closing song is the above-mentioned "Gimme Some Lovin'." Both the audio and video is fantastic, with sound choices in stereo or Dolby 5.1 surround. You also get a 3-song CD recorded in 1994 which sounds like a practice session with only Winwood and Capaldi. It says on the back that you can use the CD to unlock bonus video footage by going to www.stevewinwood.com. I'm not sure what they are talking about, but if you go there you can view a few clips from the video if you want to check it out. Look for them in the news section to

the left.

This DVD has been dedicated to Chris Wood, Gerry Garcia, former Traffic percussionist Reebop Kwaku Baah and, in Winwood's words, "To the man without whom Traffic could never be: my lifelong friend Jim Capaldi."

In closing...if you are over 50 or so, I'd advise against the possible temptation to track down a tab of acid or whatever to enjoy the experience. The occasional psychedelic patterns and things swirling about might make you toss your cookies. Actually, that would probably be the least of your problems. Trust me, this is thoroughly enjoyable without any outside help whatsoever. Bill Wahl

Traffic: DualDisc Version

Epic Records has also issued a DualDisc of the music from the Traffic video if you only care about the audio. It is a two disc set - Disc 1, a CD, contains the first 6 songs from the video; Disc 2 - the 2-sided DualDisc, contains the remaining 5 on the CD side. The DVD side of the DualDisc contains all 11 songs in enhanced stereo, a traffic interview with Winwood and Capaldi and rare archival footage and photos. The DVD video reviewed above does not contain the interview, photos or archival footage - it is just the concert. -BW

STEVE WINWOOD

About Time

EPIC RECORDS DUALDISC

Steve Winwood's 1993 CD *About Time*, which was released on his own label Wincraft Records, has been released by Epic Records as a 2-disc CD/Dualdisc set. I had no idea this album ever existed until I came across this DD version last month. The music here is primo Winwood - the kind of stuff he was known for with Spencer Davis and Traffic, but better. Here he covers jazz, rock, funk, R&B and latin, as well as Afro, Jamaican and Caribbean Island styles and rhythms. There is absolutely nothing pop about any of the music here. What a treat!

Apparently after his 1997 album (*Junction Seven*) he got fed up with feeding into the hit parade and decided to go back to the roots - something his longtime fans have been

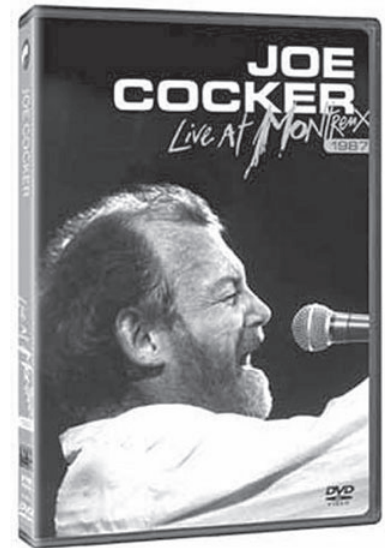
yearning for. He built this album on the foundation of an organ trio - Hammond B3 with guitar and drums. There is no bass player - he "kicks bass" like the old organ masters such as Jimmy Smith, Jack McDuff and others (or he may be doing the bass with his left hand), who were obviously his early influences. Applying this kind of trio to the styles and rhythms mentioned above results in some outstanding music. Speaking of kicking, I'm kicking myself for missing his recent House of Blues concert. But since I had no idea this album existed, I presumed he was going to be doing his pop stuff. Oh well, hindsight is still always 20/20.

He's joined here by guitarist Jose Pires de Almeida Neto and drummer Walfredo Reyes Jr., who also plays additional percussion on some tracks. If his name sounds familiar, you just read it in the review of the Traffic concert DVD above. There is also a conga player on 6 of the 11 tracks, a timbale player on the same 6, and a saxophonist/flautist who plays on 4. All the songs were written or co-written by Winwood, except for Timmy Thomas' R&B gem "Why Can't We Live Together," which was also done by Sade. There is no question that those into the "real" Stevie Winwood would love this album, as well as Santana fans and a host of others into rhythmically creative music.

This DualDisc version contains the original 11 songs on Disc 1 (a CD) of the 2-disc set. The second disc, the DualDisc, contains 3 bonus tracks - live versions of his band playing Traffic's "Dear Mr. Fantasy," "Why Can't We Live Together" and Jimi Hendrix' "Voodoo Chile" on the CD side. The DVD side contains the entire album and the bonus tracks in enhanced stereo, plus live concert videos of the band - one at the Austin City Limits Festival in Austin Texas and two at the Sanoma Jazz Festival in California. Great stuff here, and for a list price of 18.99 you sure get a lot of bang for your buck. The DualDisc is in fact only 2 bucks and a penny more than the original straight CD version. You can sample it at www.stevewinwood.com. Navigate yourself to the solo albums and via *discography* click on this one.

A first rate gift. Grab one for yourself too! If you don't like it, you can email me and tell me I'm a moron.

Bill Wahl



JOE COCKER Live at Montreux 1987 EAGLE ROCK DVD

Joe Cocker may be one of the most under-rated singers of our time. He can take a song like "With A Little Help From My Friend," one of the Beatles most hokey recordings, and turn it into a virtual masterpiece. That song, which launched his career into the big time with his album and Woodstock appearance in '69, is heard on this 1987 live Montreux Jazz Festival performance.

Cocker pretty much transforms any song he wishes to tackle into a unique, standout rendition. He does just that to 12 more songs here, such as Marvin Gaye's "Inner City Blues," Bob Dylan's "Dear Landlord" and "Watching The River Flow" and Dave Mason's "Feelin Alright." some of the other songs he does here are "You Can Leave Your Hat On," "Seven Days," "You are So Beautiful," "Guilty" and a song he did with Jennifer Warnes, "Up Where We Belong," on which he is joined by one of his background singers, Maxine Green. His six-piece band is tight and solid and Cocker is in good form throughout the show. On "Watching The River Flow" he is joined by Brian Auger on Hammond B3 organ and James Cotton on harp and second vocal.

A fine Cocker show with good audio and video quality, offering sound in stereo, DTS Surround Sound or Dolby 5.1 Surround. These Montreux performances just keep on coming from Eagle. I have a feeling we can expect many more

Bill Wahl

DualDisc

WHAT IS IT?

Since many new releases are offered with the DualDisc option, which don't cost much, if any, more than a regular CD, below is some facts about the format courtesy of DualDisc's official website, DualDisc.com

Everything you want to know about DualDisc

What Is A DualDisc?

DualDisc has both a CD player side and a DVD side, allowing artists to create in exciting new ways using audio, video and computer content - all on a single two-sided disc.

What Is On A DualDisc?

One side is the full-length CD audio album. The other side offers DVD content. This may include enhanced album audio, 5.1 surround sound, music videos, artist interviews, behind-the-scenes footage, documentary films, photo galleries, lyrics, computer-ready digital song files, and Web links. It all depends on the artist.

Do I Need New Equipment?

No. However, to take full advantage of DualDiscs that feature surround sound music, you'll need a 5.1 channel surround system.

What Is Enhanced Audio And Surround Sound?

The DVD side of the DualDisc offers superior audio. Many DualDiscs include surround sound mixes that have been specially created during the recording process. When listened to on a 5.1 channel surround system, the result is a rich, three-dimensional musical experience.

Where Can I Play A DualDisc?

We recommend using the DVD side if you have a DVD player in order to enjoy the entire album in enhanced audio and the additional DVD features. The DVD side plays wherever a DVD plays - including many gaming consoles and computers. In a PC, the DVD side acts like a DVD-ROM on DualDiscs that include computer extras and Web links. The CD side plays on all but a limited number of CD and DVD models.

How Can I Tell Which Side Is Which?

Each side is clearly marked for play on a CD or DVD player.

What If I Put A DualDisc In My Player Upside-Down?

If you place the DVD side in a CD player, it will not play - just turn it over and re-insert.

What DualDisc Titles Are Available?

Beginning in Fall 2004, a range of DualDisc titles have become available across a variety of genres, for both new and catalog releases. Check back here (www.dualdisc.com) and at individual record label websites for specifics on titles and dates.

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jazz
blues

December 2005 – January 2006 • Holiday Special • Issue 278

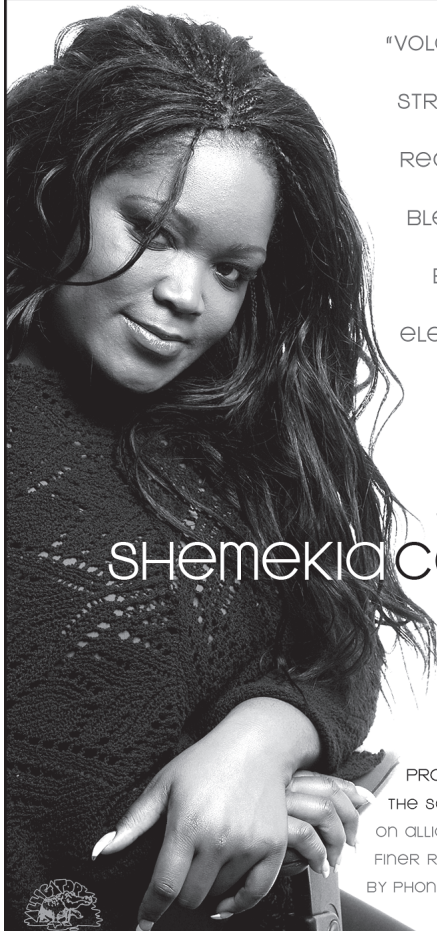
LOVE, JANIS

Limited run at the Hanna Theatre is Held Over to February 12

Here is a great gift idea. Give your friends some tickets to *Love, Janis!* The life and music of rock-n-roll icon Janis Joplin is exploding onto the Hanna Theatre stage in this new rock musical, which opened November 17 and was scheduled to run only through January 15. It has been going over so well that it has been extended until February 12!

Love, Janis goes behind the music and offers a glimpse at the soul of a legend both through the letters she wrote home and the songs she made famous. Her classic music comes to life in this hauntingly intimate portrayal inspired by the bestselling book by Laura Joplin. There is the Janis Joplin that most people remember - the female icon of 60s rock music - the singular performer whose talent and voice defied traditional musical definitions - the troubled woman who died tragically young. But there was also another side to Janis, the one remembered by her family and her friends. This sensitive, intelligent, funny person is at the heart of *Love, Janis*.

Love, Janis features all of the great music that has kept the singer's legendary status bright, even among generations who never experienced her performances firsthand. "Piece of my Heart," "Ball and Chain," "Down on Me," "Me and Bobby McGee" and "Mercedes Benz" are just five of the nearly 20 songs included in the show. But



"VOLCANIC DELIVERY AND
STRAIGHT-FROM-THE-GUT
REALISM...A MASTERFUL
BLEND OF FIERY BLUES,
BALLSY BALLADS AND
ELECTRIFYING ROCKERS"
-VIBE

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Shemekia Copeland

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the musical also focuses on the letters that Janis wrote home to her family, letters that demonstrate a down-to-earth girl who missed her family, sought advice, yearned for approval and, most of all, fought to stay authentic and true to herself despite her growing celebrity. The journey is told in Janis' own words: the entire text comes directly from her actual letters and her many press, radio and television interviews.

Love, Janis is directed by Randal Myler who earned a Tony Award nomination for *It Ain't Nothin' But the Blues* and is the director and co-author of *Hank Williams: Lost Highway* and *Fire on the Mountain*. Music direction is provided by Sam Andrew, founding member of Big Brother and the Holding Company, whose pieces – written before, during and after Janis' tenure with the band – have been used in numerous major motion picture soundtracks and documentaries. During his career as a musician and composer, Mr. Andrew has had three platinum albums and two hit singles.

Tickets to *Love, Janis* are on sale at the Playhouse Square Center Ticket Office; by phone at 216.241.6000 or 1.800.766.6048 or online at www.playhousesquare.com. Performance times are Tuesday through Friday evenings at 7:30 pm, Saturday at 4:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. and Sunday at 1 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. .

Ticket prices are \$39.50 and \$49.50. Groups of 16 or more, call group sales at 216.664.6050.

Title sponsor of the Broadway Series at Playhouse Square Center is McDonald Financial Group. Visit www.key.com/mfg for more information.

BLUES WATCH

By Mark Smith

If you find yourself bewildered about what to purchase your favorite blues buddy for Christmas or if you are stumped about what to put on your own list so that your clueless non-blues friends don't buy you a another House of Blues T-shirt, consider a few of the following ideas:

1. *Juke Joint- Photographs*. This book explores interiors of Juke Joints throughout the land. Hardcover \$55, paperback \$35. Available through University Press of Mississippi. www.UPRESS.STATE.MS.US. or through 1-800-737-7788. 2. A Subscription to *Blues Revue Magazine*- \$23.95 a year (6 issues). Call 1-800-258-7388. Subscribers will also receive three Blues Revue sampler discs featuring a wide variety of established and up and coming artists. 3. A subscription to *Big City Blues Magazine*- \$25 per year (six issues), \$50 for two years (12 issues) and \$75 for three years (18 issues). Send a check or money order to Big City Blues, P.O. Box 1805, Royal Oak, MI 48068-1805. 4. A Subscription to *Living Blues*- \$23.95 a year (6 issues). Call 1-800-390-3527. 5. David Dalton's wonderful book *Been Here and Gone- A Memoir of the Blues* (Morrow, 2000) which brings the key figures of blues history such as Charlie Patton, Lightning Hopkins, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Sonny Boy Williamson, Leadbelly, Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey to life. Using a fictional bluesman, Coley Williams, who grows up with the blues and meets these artists and many others along the way, Dalton adds three dimensions to the dry historical facts about their lives and times. Gamblers, con artists, drunks, divas and poets all found their way into the blues and over the course of 395 pages Dalton introduces us to all of them. You'll never hear these artists the same way after they come alive for you through Coley William's recollections of their times together. An indispensable book for anyone with any interest in the characters who created the blues. 6. *Rollin' and Tumblin'*—edited by Jas Obrecht- A 480

page collection of essays and interviews detailing the careers of 25 electric blues guitarists including Lightnin' Hopkins, Hubert Sumlin, Jimmy Rogers and Freddie, Albert and B.B. King. 7. Membership in the Blues Foundation. \$25 per year for membership gives voting rights in the annual W.C. Handy competition, discounts on merchandise, the Foundation's newsletter and other benefits. Call 1-800-861-8795. 8. A membership to your local blues society. 9. *The Blues Highway- New Orleans to Chicago*- is a road trip through the cradle of musical innovation in America. This travel and music guide follows Highway 61, the Illinois Central railroad and the Mississippi River to explore the roots of jazz, blues, Cajun, zydeco, country, rock & roll, soul and gospel music from Congo Square in New Orleans to down-home Delta juke-joints and on to South Side Chicago clubs. Exciting features include: detailed city guides; extensive listings on where to stay and where to eat; where to find the best music clubs and bars; historic landmarks; who's who of jazz and blues; when and where to find music festivals and events; and the people, culture and cuisine of The Blues Highway. I can speak from personal experience- this book took me straight to such historic sights as the Stovall Plantation where Muddy Waters took his first steps and countless other stops on a recent journey from New Orleans back to Michigan. A must have. 10. *Escaping the Delta- Robert Johnson and the Invention of the Blues*. HarperCollins, 2004. Author Elijah Wald puts Robert Johnson's contribution to the blues in context and explores the evolution of the blues from the Delta to today's white bread for the masses. 11. **Blues DVDs**. Those that can't make it out to see their favorite blues artists or who simply weren't around when the artist was alive can increasingly fill this hole in their musical life by taking a spin through the music DVD section of their music store. Check out some of these as stocking stuffers: **Rod Piazza & the Mighty Flyers- Big Blues Party**; **Tommy Castro- Whole Lotta Soul**; **Magic Slim & The Tear-drops- Anything Can Happen**; **Duke Robillard and Friends- A Special Evening With**; . There are plenty of additional blues related DVDs available through your local retailer. You can also travel into cyberspace and grab some through Amazon.com- go to the DVD section, type in the name of your favorite artist and see if something is available. 12. A selection (or two!!!) from

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Smitty's 2005 blues picks; **13.** A piece of highly cool art for the blues lover can be scored at www.primitivekoolart.com. **14.** For the big spenders, how about a cabin on the Pacific Coast edition of the Legendary Blues Cruise which is set to sail from San Diego to Cabo San Lucas on October 3, 2006 or the Caribbean edition which sails from Ft. Lauderdale on January 14, 2007? Info is available at 816-753-7979. Everyone I've spoken with that has ever been on one of these cruises swears it is the best blues experience ever with dozens of top name acts and countless jam sessions amongst the artists. **15.** Finally, at the other end of the budget scale, how about a blues calendar with such legends as Lonnie Brooks, Buddy Guy, Gatemouth Brown or Hubert Sumlin? Available through Alligator Records at Alligator.com for a mere \$13.98. Happy Holidays!! See ya next year. -Smitty

Smitty's 2005 Year End Picks

Here we go again with another trip into controversy. No matter what discs make my list I'm sure to exclude someone's favorite of the year. So here's the deal. These aren't the best in any empirical sense. They're simply my favorites of the year.

1. Renee Austin- *Right About Love*. With eleven mostly self-penned tracks to showcase her stunning voice Renee Austin's sophomore effort on Blind Pig is a glorious trip through road house rock, gospel, western swing and Memphis style blues. What really sets Austin apart from virtually all her peers is the immense versatility of her voice. Her slow numbers are rich and nuanced, her gospel and swing numbers are nimble and her rockers are throaty and powerful. While any number of singers can work their way through a good ballad or power their way to the front of a stomping rocker, very few can do both as well as Austin Pick this up and treat yourself to a terrific vocal showcase by an artist who clearly has a bright future ahead of her.

2. Hollywood Blue Flames- *Soul Sanctuary*. This disc matches the surviving members of the Hollywood Fats Band with hot shot guitarist Kirk "Eli" Fletcher who has gone from relative obscurity to the top echelon of the blues world over the past couple of years with his own solo recordings and high profile gigs with the Fabulous Thunderbirds and The Mannish Boys. While filling in for the immensely talented Fats would cause a lesser talent to overplay his parts in an effort to show himself worthy of the role, Fletcher avoids that trap and, instead,

plays with highly skilled restraint. The rest of the band plays with the exuberance of prisoners freed from the shackles of their storied past. Instead of longing for the faded glory days when Fats made them the envy of the West Coast blues scene they are now free to be in the moment and even create a new history.

3. Sean Costello- On this, his Tone Cool Records debut, guitarist Sean Costello checks in with a terrifically crafted, soulful disc. Costello uses his guitar to augment rather than totally dominate the songs. The real accomplishment of this disc is just how easily Costello's original numbers stand tall against the gold standard of the covers by the likes of Al Green, Bob Dylan and Robert Ward. . If Costello keeps his focus on crafting songs rather than hot shot guitar solos he will be in the disc racks for years to come.

4. Sugar Ray and the Bluetones- *Hands Across the Table*. On his fourth disc after leaving Roomful of Blues in late 1996, Sugar Ray Norcia and his fellow Bluetones are joined by new guitarist Paul Size and two of his former Roomful band mates. The resulting disc is a hard hitting slice of Chicago style blues with some swinging upbeat cuts thrown in for good measure. Featuring plenty of Ray's adept harmonica work and rich, buttery vocals the 13 cuts collected here harken back to Ray's pre-Roomful days when he was a band leader rather than simply a band member. It's no stretch at all to say this marks Ray's best work since leaving Roomful.

5. Paul Oscher- *Down In the Delta*. Playing primarily solo with a harmonica in a neck rack and a guitar on a number of tracks and with superstar support on the balance, Paul Oscher has crafted a fine slice of traditional blues. The photos of Oscher that adorn the disc tell the story here. Rather than posing in front of a faux Roadhouse or blues shack a 'la the entry to most House of Blues facilities, Oscher plopped himself on the porch of the storied Hobson's Plantation in Clarksdale, Mississippi, revealing the honest, raw boned grit and weathered history that infuses every track. There's no party here, just the straight blues that exorcise the demons and call for white lightning to wash away the evil taste they leave behind.

6. Jimmy "T99" Nelson- *The Legend*. Following the recipe he successfully used on his 2002 release, *Take Your Pick*, 86 year old Houston blues shouter Jimmy "T99" Nelson has reassembled the lion's share of the late 80's/early 90's edi-

tion of Roomful of Blues to back up his Big Joe Turner inspired vocals. While he isn't as quick with a phrase as he once was, he makes up for it with the richness the slower pace adds to his hearty voice. This is music aimed strictly at your feet and butt.. Take a listen and be transported through a rich slice of blues history.

7. Roomful of Blues- *Standing Room Only*. Simply put, this 30 year old band has rarely sounded better. With everything from fast paced, horn laden numbers, jump blues, slinky, guitar driven mambo grooves and even the slow, emotional blues that are Bobby "Blue" Bland's stock in trade Roomful has all the bases covered. While that can be a problem for less talented groups Roomful carries off each of these styles without missing a beat.

8. Tommy Castro- *Soul Shaker*. With a sound that forges the soulful horn vibe of Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes with Delbert McClinton style southern soul and a heavy dose of stinging guitar blues, Castro and his sterling band have crafted a disc that is consistently engaging. Leaving the straight blues shuffles to others, Castro and crew take on funk, a bit of jazz, steamy soul, classic rock and even a Dixie -fried bit of Little Feat style rump shaking with the title track. Don't worry that all this stretching means that Castro has left his guitar in the case. While there are no long winded solos (and haven't we had enough of those lately??) there's plenty of guitar here.

9. Fabulous Thunderbirds- *Painted On*. While he's the only original member, Kim Wilson is determined to keep the Fabulous Thunderbirds alive. This disc pairs him with a couple of hot shot guitarists, Nick Curran and Kirk "Eli" Fletcher who acquit themselves well in the spot once occupied by Jimmie Vaughan. You have to go back to the pre-MTV days to hear a better T-Birds release. With hard rocking grooves, tight soul and straight out Texas style blues this one is a real keeper.

10. Jimi Bott- *Live Vol. 1, Cheap Thrills*. Recorded live during his stints as drummer for the likes of Rod Piazza & the Mighty Flyers, The Fabulous Thunderbirds, Mark Hummel and a host of others, Bott has captured some blissful blues moments. None of these tracks were part of a planned recording project (many are board or even walkman tapes) so no one was uptight and the performances have the freewheeling feel of a night at your local blues bar.

See you in 2006!